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A
Brief Enquiry
Into the True
N A T U R E
O F
SCHISM:
O R, A
P E R S U A S I V E to Christian
L O V E and C H A R I T Y.

To which is Added,
The Lay-Man's R E A S O N S,
For his Joining in Stated Com-
munion, with a Congregation of
M O D E R A T E D I S S E N T E R S.

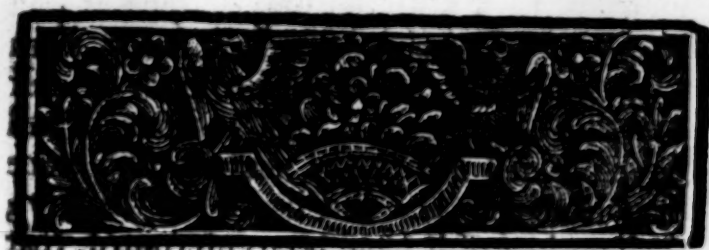
Humbly submitted to better Judgments :
By M A T T H E W H E N R Y.

Psalm 120 l. אִישׁ לוֹ I Peace.

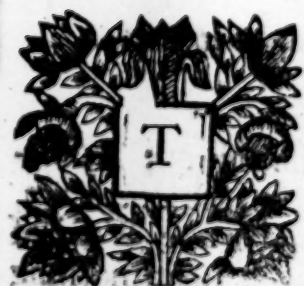
L O N D O N:

Printed for S. CRUTTENDEN and T. COX, at
the Bible and Three Crowns near Mercers-Chappel
Cheapside, 1717.





A
 Brief Enquiry
 Into the True
 N A T U R E
 O F
 SCHISM, &c.



HERE hath scarce any one thing that hath been bandied to and fro in the Christian World, with more Heat and Noise among the several Dividing Parties than the charge of *Schism*. This hath involv'd the disputing part of the Church in the most violent Engagements above Twelve Hundred Years. Schism is so deform'd a Brat, that

no body hath been willing to own it ; a Crime so very black, that each Party hath been studiously industrious to clear it self from the charge. To this Indictment all have pleaded *Not Guilty*, and we find none that have *justified*. But here's the Misery ; such notions of it have been entertain'd, that it hath been almost impossible to deny, without recriminating. And perhaps the most guilty have been most hot in charging others. *Athaliah* the greatest Traitor is most loud in crying, *Treason, Treason*.

We are all agreed that Schism is an *Arch-Rebel* in Christ's Kingdom, but in sending out the Hue and Cry after it, the Difficulty is, how to *describe* it ; several Attempts have been made ; would it be in vain to try one more ? Waveing all Enquiries into the several Definitions and Descriptions which have been given of it, let us have recourse to the Law and to the Testimony, for whoever speak in the things of God, (as they certainly do who speak of Sin and Duty) if they speak not according to that Rule, it is because there is no Light in them.

Therefore I only premise this one *Postulatium*, That nothing is to be accounted Sin, but that which is made so by the Word of God : *Tekel* is to be written upon nothing but that which hath been carefully weigh'd in the Ballances of the Sanctuary.

In our Enquiry what is Sin, let those Books be open'd which must be open'd at the great day. If Sinners must be judg'd by those Books shortly, let Sin be judg'd by them now, and let not any Man or Company of Men in the World assume a Power to declare that to be Sin, which the Sovereign Rector of the World hath not declared to be so, lest in so doing they be found stepping into the Throne of God who is a Jealous God, and will not give this Branch of his Glory to another.

Let us therefore see what the Scripture saith concerning Schism, not concerning the Evil of it, we are convinced of that, but concerning the Nature and *formalis ratio* of it.

The Old Testament will not help us so much in this enquiry as the New for as to the binding of the *Jews* to worship only in one place, at *Jerusalem*, and to offer only upon that Altar, it was a Precept purely Ceremonial, and to us Christians is vacated by that Gospel Rule which Wills us to Pray every where, and their Synagogues then (not their Temple) were the Patterns of Christian Assemblies.

Only one Scripture occurs in the Old Testament, which perhaps will help to rectify some mistake about Schism. It is the instance of *Eldad* and *Medad* who Prophesied in the Camp. The Case in short is

this: *Eldad* and *Medad* were Persons upon whom *the Spirit rested*, i. e. Who were by the extraordinary working of the Spirit endued with Gifts equal to the rest of the Seventy Elders, and were *written*, i. e. Had a call to the Work, but they *went not out unto the Tabernacle* as the rest did, though God himself had appointed that they should, v. 16. And *they prophesied in the Camp*, i. e. Exercis'd their Gifts in private among their Neighbours, in some common Tent. Upon what inducements they did this, doth not appear, but it is evident that it was their Weakness and Infirmary thus to separate from the rest of their Brethren. If any think they Prophefied by a necessitating, and irresistible Impulse, they may remember, that *the Spirit of the Prophets is subject to the Prophets*.

1 Cor. 14,
15.

Now if some of the *Schismaticating Doctors* that the Church had known, had but had the censuring of *Eldad* and *Medad*, we should soon have had a Judgment given against them much more severe, than would have been awarded to him that gathered Sticks on the Sabbath-Day.

And 'tis confessed, all the circumstances consider'd it looks like a very great Irregularity, especially as an infringement of the Authority of *Moses*, which they who Prophefied in the Tabernacle under his Presidency manifestly own'd and submitted to.

Well,

Well, an Information was presently brought in against them, *v. 27. Eldad and Medad Prophecie in the Camp*, that is, to speak in the invidious language of the times, there's a Conventicle at such a place, and *Eldad and Medad* are holding forth at it.

Joshua in his zeal for that which he fancy'd to be the Churches Unity, and out of a concern for the authority of *Moses* brings in a Bill to silence them, for as hot as he was he would not have them fin'd and laid in the Jail for this disorder neither; only, *My Lord Moses, forbid them*; not, compel them to come to the Tabernacle, if they be not satisfi'd to come, only for the future prohibit their Schismatical Preaching in the Camp. This seem'd a very good motion.

But hold *Joshua, thou knowest not what manner of Spirit thou art of*. Discerning *Moses* sees him acted by a Spirit of envy, and doth not only deny, but severely reprove the motion, *v. 29. Enviest thou for my sake? Would to God that all the Lords People were Prophets*, provided the Lord will but put his Spirit upon them. He is so far from looking upon it as Schism, that he doth not only tolerate but encourage it. And O that all those who sit in *Moses* Chair, were but cloth'd with this Spirit of *Moses*.

This Instance is full enough to shew that all is not Schism which even wise and good Men are apt to think is so.

But

But our special Enquiry must be in the New Testament, and forasmuch as Words are the significations of things let us see what the Scripture means by this Word, *Schism*.

The *Criticks* observe, that the Greek Word $\chi\acute{\iota}\sigma\mu\alpha$ is used Eight Times in the New Testament.

Matth. 9.
16.

1. In a literal Sense, for a rent in a Garment, $\chi\acute{\iota}\sigma\mu\alpha$, *the rent is made worse*. In the same Sense $\chi\acute{\iota}\sigma\omega$ is us'd. As also of the rending of the Vail. The cleaving of the Heavens. But this makes little to our purpose.

Mark 2. 21.

John 9. 24.

Luk 5. 36.

Mat. 27, 51.

Jeh. 21, 11.

Mar. 1. 10.

2. It is us'd figuratively for a Division ; and that twofold.

John, 7, 43.

John 9, 16,

10, 19.

1. A Division in apprehension ; so $\chi\acute{\iota}\sigma\mu\alpha$ is us'd. In which places it signifies the different thoughts and apprehensions that the People or their Rulers had concerning Christ some thinking well of him, others not. Some accusing him, others excusing him.

Act. 23. 7.

In this Sense $\chi\acute{\iota}\sigma\omega$ is us'd. For the different sentiments the People had concerning Paul.

Now this diversity of Opinion, Judgment or apprehension cannot be call'd or look't upon in it self a thing Criminal : Inasmuch as there are many things which either

ther because they are dark and obscure, and so not capable of Demonstration, or because they are trivial and of light moment, and so not worth a Demonstration, it is no matter what opinion Men are of concerning them.

Only where the matter is weighty and toucheth the Fundamentals of Christianity, there an error is Criminal, and if stubbornly persisted in, Heresie.

But the evil of it lies not in the diversity, but in the erroneousness and danger of the opinion.

I cannot believe that the greatest worshippers of the *Diana* of their own opinions, will be so sortish as to brand those for Schismatics who in every *punctilio* of Opinion are not exactly of the same Standard with themselves.

If there be any so strangely rigid, *Let not my Soul come into their secret*, for I despair to see even all the Saints of a Mind in every thing till they come to Heaven.

It doth therefore evidence too great a strangeness to the Spirit of the Gospel, to condemn all those who differ from us only in their apprehensions about little things. *John's* Disciples were hugely displeas'd because *Christ's* Disciples did not fast so often as they did, and quarrel'd with Christ himself about it. And the answer of the meek

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and

Mat. 9. 14. and Holy Jesus is worthy Remark, that he gives a good Reason why his Disciples did not fast, viz. Because *the Bridegroom, was yet with them* ; and yet doth not condemn *John's* Disciples that fasted oft, which teacheth us not to make our own Opinions and Practices (like *Procrustes's* Bed) the Standard by which to measure all other, and that in such Cases, we are to think it sufficient only to acquit our selves, first to our own Consciencies, and then if need be to the World, without condemning others, who think and Practise otherwise in such little things, and perhaps have as much reason for their Thoughts and Practises as we have for ours.

2. A Division in Affection ; and in this Sense it is us'd three times in the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, and no where else in all the New Testament.

We must particularly examine each place, that thence we may be furnish'd with a true notion of Schism ; and in plain terms the Case is whether a Diversity (or if you will call it so, a Separation) of Communion be the *formalis ratio* of Schism.

1. I find the Word, and with it no doubt the thing, *I beseech you brethren—that there be no divisions* (*ἁρμονία*) no Schisms among you ; so Reads the Margin of our Bibles.

Now to find out what this Schism is, let us enquire,

1. Into

1. Into the Exegetical exhortations that accompany it.

(1.) *That ye all speak the same things; viz.* In the fundamental Doctrines of Christianity, for in little things it can never be made a duty to be of the same opinion, since it is morally impossible; but (as *Estius* seems to understand it) not to break Christian Charity in your disputes about them.

Observe, He doth not oblige us to think the same thing, but though your thoughts be divers, yet speak the same thing, *i. e.* In your Preaching and Converſe, ſpeak of thoſe things only wherein you are agreed, and for thoſe things wherein you differ, do not fall out and fight about them, but love one another notwithstanding.

(2.) *That ye be perfectly join'd together in the ſame Mind and in the ſame Judgment.* Which muſt be underſtood of a ſerious Endeavour after it, for otherwiſe a perfect Conjunction, muſt be reſerv'd for a World of Everlaſting Perfection.

But the meaning of the Exhortation ſeems to be, that all their little heats and animofities ſhould be ſwallow'd up in an unanimous zeal for the great Goſpel Truths, wherein they were all agreed.

2. We muſt enquire into the *Corinthians* miſcarriage which occaſion'd this caution,

which you have, v. 11, 12. there were contentions among them, v. 11. *Epistles*. So that *Schisms* and *Contentions* are one and the same thing, and 'tis worth noting, that *Clement Romanus* in that famous Epistle of his to the *Corinthians*, still calls *Schisms* *Epistles*, *Contentions*.

Now the contention was about their Ministers; I am of *Paul*, saith one, I am of *Apollos*, saith another, &c. Now he that was of *Apollos* was as much a Schismatick, as he that was of *Paul*, because they quarrel'd and fell out about so small and indifferent a matter.

Observe, It was not so much being of *Paul* and being of *Apollos* that made the Schism, for *Paul* and *Apollos* and *Cephas* were all their's, Chap. 3. 22. But saying, I am of *Paul*, that is, crying him up as the only Man for them, so as to despise others. If one went to hear *Paul*, and another went to hear *Apollos*, that did not make a Schism, nor if one communicate with *Paul*, and another with *Apollos*, for why might not each go where he could be most Edify'd? But the Schism was, that they Sacrific'd Christian Love and Charity to this difference of Apprehension. This is evident in that those who said, I am of *Christ*, so as to despise and censure, and quarrel with them that said I am of *Paul*, &c. are reprov'd equally with the rest.

Now the way of curing this Schism was not to silence *Apollos* and *Cephas*, that whether they would or no they might all be of *Paul*; nay it is well worth the observing

ving that in the same Epistle we find Paul very earnest with Apollos to go to Corinth. 16. 12. *As touching Apollos, I greatly desired him to come to you.* Which he would never have done if he had not prefer'd the common Interest of Soul's Salvation before his own Credit.

But the way to cure this was to convince them of the Folly of their Quarrels, how senseless and irrational they were; and to persuade them to lay aside their Enmities and heart-burnings, and to love one another, and to walk hand in hand in the same way, though they traced different paths, which they might well do when the paths lay so very near together.

By this instance it appears, that narrow-spiritedness which confines Religion and the Church to our way and party, whatever it is, to the condemning of others that differ from us in little things is the great Schismaticating Principle, which hath been so much the bane of the Christian Church, *hinc illa lacryma.*

2. We find the Word us'd, *I hear there be divisions among you.* 1 COR. I. 11. 18.

It is undeniably evident that it cannot be meant of any breach of Communion, for it is said expressly, v. 20. That they *came together in one place*, and that *into the Church too, i. e.* The place of meeting.

But the Schisms were Quarrels and Contentions about some little things relating to

the Circumstances of Publick Worship, and the quarrel seems to have been about the time of beginning their Worship, especially when they were to joyn in the Lord's Supper, or their Love-feasts, it seems they did not come exactly at the time, therefore the Apostle bids them *tarry one for another*, v. 33. Those that came early quarrel'd with those that came late, or coming no sooner, and those that came late quarrel'd with the other, for beginning before they came.

Some quarrels of this kind were the Schisms here spoken of.

The Word is us'd, *That there be no Schism*
 1 Cor. 12.25. *in the Body.* The Apostle is there carrying on a Metaphor betwixt the Natural Body, and the Church, and this clause clearly relates to the Natural Body, for he doth not come to the Reddition of the comparison till v. 27.

Now what he means by the *Schism in the body* is plain from the *Antitibesis* in the following Words—*but that the Members should have the same care one for another*, So that when the Members care not one for another, when the Eye saith to the hand, I have no need of thee, v. 21. When there is not a sympathy and fellow feeling among Christians, v. 26. here's Schism.

That's Schism which breaks or slackens the bond by which the Members are knit together.

Now

Now that Bond is not an Act of Uniformity in point of Communion in the same Modes and Ceremonies, but true Love and Charity, in point of Affection. 'Tis Charity that is the *bond of perfectness*. 'Tis the *Col. 3. 14.*
Eph. 4. 3. Unity of the Spirit that is the *bond of peace*. And Schism is that which breaks this Bond. —

Now from all this laid together, I draw out this description of Schism, which according to my present apprehensions is the true Scripture Notion of it.

“ Schism is an uncharitable Distance, Division, or Alienation of Affections among those who are called Christians, and agree in the Fundamentals of Religion, occasion'd by their different apprehensions about little things.

This is the Schism which the Scripture makes to be a Sin, and by Scripture Rules it must be judged. *Schism* (as indeed the Root of all other Sin) we see lies in the Heart and Affections: But the Tree is known by his Fruits; this bitter root bears Gall and Wormwood. Let us therefore take a short view of those practices, which according to this Description are Schismatical Practices.

1. Judging, censuring, and condemning those that differ from us in little things is a Schismatical Practice, as it evidenceth

a great alienation, if not enmity of the Affections. *Charity thinketh no evil, & λογίζετο τὸ κακόν*, doth not *reason* evil, doth not study to make Sins, but cover them; and if they be made, yet not to make the worst of them; it puts the best construction upon Words and Actions.

Now to pass a censorious Judgment upon others, and to put the worst construction upon what they say and do, is certainly uncharitable, that is, Schismatical. It is a practice often Condemn'd in Holy Writ; *Judge not, that ye be not judged*: 'Tis construed a *judging of the Law*.

Mat. 7. 1.
Jam. 4, 11,
12.

'Tis especially Condemn'd with reference to the present Case, of different apprehensions about little things, in that famous Scripture *Rom. 14. 4, 5, &c.* a Scripture, which if well study'd and liv'd up to, would heal us all. Judging the Heart, is in my Eye, one of the most uncharitable species of Judging. Censuring the Principles an ends of an Action, which are secret: Charging those that differ from us with Hypocrisie, which is a Heart Sin. If the shews be good, and the outside justifiable, when we conclude Hypocrisie is in the Heart, we step into the Throne of God.

2. Laying a greater stress upon small matters of difference than they will bear, and widening the breach about them. As on the one hand, to censure all Prayers by a Form, or by this Form in particular, as superstition,

Superstition, Will-worship, Formality, and the like : On the other hand, to censure all *Extempore* praying as babling, canting, froth and noise, as if God had not accepted his own People in the one as well as the other. The fastening of a Censure, and passing of a Judgment upon a whole party and way, if it be not very clear and well-grounded indeed, will be likely to split us upon the Rock of Schism and Uncharitableness.

3. Concluding hardly as to the spiritual state and condition of those that differ from us, excluding them out of the Church, and from Salvation because they are not just of our Mind in every punctilio.

Witness that Notion which excludes out of the Church, and consequently out of Heaven all those (how orthodox and serious soever they are otherwise) who are not in Prelatical Communion; if no Diocesan Bishops, then no Ministers, no Sacraments, no Church, no Salvation. Which is certainly the most Schismatical Notion that ever was broach'd in the Christian World.

4. Reproaching, reviling, and railing at those who differ from us in little things, is another Schismatical Practice : Fastning such nick-names upon them, and loading them with such reproaches as carry in them all the *odium* that malice can infuse into them ; dressing them up in Bears-Skins and then baiting them, doing what we can by
C calumnies,

calumnies and misrepresentations to alienate the affections of others from them.

Making, consenting to, approving or executing of Penal Laws against those who differ from us in little things, to punish them for such difference in their Persons, Estates or Liberties is another Uncharitable or Schismatical Practice.

This is contention with a Witness—— which aims at no less than the ruin of the Person contended with, in the dearest of his secular interests, to beat out his Brains, because his Head is not exactly of our size.

6. Separation from Communion with those that we have joyn'd our selves to, without cause ; give me leave to call it *Separation for Separation sake*, without any regard had to any thing amiss in the Church we separate from, or any thing better in that we joyn our selves to, this is an evidence of an Uncharitable alienation of Affection, and is consequently Schismatical. When we quite cast off Communion with our Brethren, out of Ambition, Animosity to their Persons, Affectation of Novelty and Singularity, or the like.

This was manifestly the Case of the *Donatists*, the infamous Schismaticks of the Primitive Church. Their Principles were, that the Church of Christ was to be found nowhere but in their Sect, and all other Churches were no Churches ; that true Baptism was
not

not Administred but among them, and a great many barbarous outrages they committed in the heat of their separation.

7. An affected strangeness or distance in Communion or Conversation from those who thus differ from us upon the account of such difference, avoiding converse and familiarity with them, carrying it strangely towards them, only because they do not wear the dividing name of our party.

This evidenceth an uncharitable alienation of affection prevailing in the Heart, and is consequently Schismatical.

Many such like Practices might easily be mention'd, if it were needful—but they are obvious enough, especially if we look into the Laws of Charity set down, 1 Cor. 13, 4, 5, 6, 7. And remember that all transgression of those Laws is Uncharitableness, and when that is found in the things of Religion, it is *Schism*. The corollary from the whole is this, that whoever they be that allow themselves in these or the like Practices and affections towards their Brethren that differ from them in little things, whether they be *Episcopal*, *Presbyterian*, *Independent* or by what Name or Title soever they are Self-dignify'd and Distinguish'd they are so far Schismatical, inasmuch as they break the great Law of Christian Charity.

Let us try what further Inference may be drawn from this Scripture Notion of Schism.

1. If this be Schism, then it is not within the line of any Humane Power to make that separation to be Schismatical which was not so in itself. By the description given of Schism it doth appear to be a thing, *malum in se*, which was not so before, an attempt of that kind would sink with its own weight. And therefore it is well worthy observation, that when the Parliament made a Law against Conventicles, (which are the great Schismatical Eye-fores) they call'd it an Act to prevent and suppress *Seditious* Conventicles, knowing it to be within their line to declare a thing to be Sedition, but not *Schismatical* Conventicles, for that was a thing in which they could not concern themselves.

2. If this be Schism then the guilt of it is to be look'd for in particular Persons, and is not to be charg'd by whole sale upon parties of any denomination whatsoever, as among us at this day, in the prelatical party there are some Schismatical, and others not, and the same is to be said of the separating party; nay who is there that can say, I have made my Heart clean, I am pure from this Sin. Have we not all need to Pray, *From Envy, Hatred and Malice, and all uncharitableness* (which are the Ingredients of *Schism*) *Good Lord deliver us*, both from the Guilt, and from the Power of it? It

is not so much our differences themselves, as the mismanagement of our differences that is the bane of the Church burning up Christian Love, with the fire of our contentions.

Whence come these *Wars and Fightings*?
Come they not hence, even from our Lusts? ^{1 Jam. 4. 1.}
 And those that say they are perfectly free from these warfaring, Schismatick Lusts must give me leave to say, I doubt they deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them.

3. If this be Schism, then there may be Schism, where there's no separation of Communion, that's plain from the instance of the *Corinthians*, who came together *into one place* and yet are blam'd for being Schismatical; bringing People to one place will never Cure a Schism, till they are brought to be of one accord.

You may bind the Leopard and lay him down by the Lamb, and yet the enmity remain as great as ever, except there be an inward change.

A quarrel about little things may likewise be Schismatical on one side, and not on t'other; *Jerennah* was a Man of strife and contention, *i. e.* A Man striven and contended with, and yet no Schismatick, ^{1 Jer. 15. 10.} though ordinarily (as it is commonly said of domestick differences) there's fault more or less on both sides.

4. If

4. If this be Schism, then the remay be Separation of Communion where there is no Schism. For thus we all agree that there may be difference of apprehension, and yet no Schism, provided it do not eat out Christian Love, but be manag'd amicably, as betwixt the Arminians and Calvinists in the Church of *England*, and divers the like.

Now if this difference of apprehension relate to Worship, or Communion, and the Modes or Terms thereof, these cannot but be a strong inclination to separate in whole or in part, according as the difference of apprehension is; for do what we can as long as we are rational Creatures, the Understanding will have the directing of the Will.

Now surely this separation, (if we must call it so, or rather) this variety and diversity of Worship and Communion may be manag'd without Schism, provided Christian Love and Charity be kept entire notwithstanding.

For can any imagine that a difference of apprehension in regard of Worship and Discipline, should be more Schismatical than difference of apprehension in Doctrine? Since of the two, Doctrinal Truths seem more Essential to Christianity.

But to come a little closer. The meetings of the Dissenters (though now blessed be God permitted and allow'd of by the Law of the

the Land, yet) are commonly charg'd with being Schismatical: The great out-cry is, that we leave the Church; and the unthinking mobile who are so well taught as to know no other Churches but the Publick Places of Worship, are easily induc'd to believe it, as if 'twere Schism to Worship God any where else, let the Worihip there be what it will.

Those who will allow themselves the Liberty of an unprejudic'd Thought, cannot but see the difference so small, that as long as we believe the same Christian Faith, and agree in the same Protestant abhorrence of Papal Delusions, we may easily be look't upon as one and the same Church, as well as Two severel Parish Churches may, especially being united under the Care and Protection of one Protestant King, and Members of the same Protestant Common wealth.

Now I. I do from the bottom of my Soul detest and abhor all Separation from the Parish Churches to Atheism, Irreligion, and Sensuality. *Who separate them- Jude 19. selves, sensual—* who forsake the Church to go to the Ale-house or Tavern, or to their secular business, or to their slothfulness and laziness, *to separate unto that shame.* And if this Separation had been more animadverted upon than it hath been of late, probably the Cure of Schism would have been sooner effected thereby than by severities that have been us'd against Conscientious Separatists. *Hf. 9. 10,*

2. I do likewise abhor all Schismatical, that is, Uncharitable, Proud, Cenforious, rigid Separation, such Separation as theirs who condemn the Parish Churches as no parts of the visible Church, who rail at Ministers as Babylonish, and Antichristian; this is a horrid breach of the Law of Christian Love, and that which every good Heart cannot but rise at the Thoughts of.

And yet I cannot but say, and am satisfy'd in it, that there may be a lawful and justifiable separation (though I would rather call it a diversity of Communion) from the Parish Churches which I shall endeavour to clear in Three Cases.

1. If my own Conscience be not satisfy'd in the lawfulness of any terms of Communion impos'd, as far as I fall under that imposition, I may justify a separation from them, and a joyning with other Churches where I may be freed from that Imposition, provided that this be not done Schismatically, *i. e.* with heat and bitterness, and an alienation of Christian Affection; and I hope none that have the Law of Christ written in their Hearts will say, that it is impossible truly to love those with whom I am not satisfy'd to joyn in all the Ordinances for the sake of some Ceremonies, with which after all my Study, Prayer, and Converse, I cannot be satisfy'd.

So, if I be a Minister, and as such oblig'd to Preach the Gospel, yet kept out from
the

the publick Exercife of my Ministry by fuch Terms and Conditions, Oaths and Subfcriptions as I judge Sinful ; in fuch a Cafe furely it is lawful for me with *Eldad* and *Medad* to *Prophefy in the Camp*, fince in my Judgment the door of the Tabernacle is made ftraiter than my Mafter hath appointed it to be made. What fhould hinder but that as a Minifter of Chrift, I may Adminifter all the Ordinances according to Chrift's Inftitution to thofe who are willing to joyn with me, and put themfelves under my Conduct (fuch as it is) in thofe Adminiftrations ? If God have given though but one Talent, it muft be Traded with, or elfe there will be an uncomfortable reckoning fhortly, efpecially, when we look abroad and confider how the apparent neceffities of precious Souls, call for our utmoft Diligence in our Mafter's Work ; and indeed there's Work enough for us all, if God would give us Hearts to be ferious and unanimous in it.

In this alfo 'tis always provided, that my agency in a Minifterial Station be not made Schifmatal by my Heat, Paflion, and Bitternefs ; but that I live in true Love and Charity with thofe whom by reafon of the Impositions I cannot *ſalvâ conſcientiâ*, joyn with in Communion.

2. Though I be ſatisfy'd in the lawfulness of the Terms of Communion requir'd, and fo when purer Adminiftrations are not to be had, may rather than live in the

total want of the Ordinances comply with them, yet when I have an opportunity of enjoying those Ordinances in a way which I judge more pure and Scriptural, or which I thing more lively and edifying, and more likely to attain the great end of all Ordinances, and that contribute more to my Comfort and Holiness, and Communion with God; in such a Case I cannot see but that I may lawfully have recourse to such Administrations, though thereby I may seem to separate from another Church, wherein before I had joyn'd, and for which I still retain a very Charitable Opinion and Affection. If the Magistrate should be so unreasonable as to impose upon me an unskilful Physician to be alone made use of in Case of Sicknes, I might take him rather than none. But if there be another who I am sure hath more Skill and Will to help me, I think I should be accessary to the ruin of my Health and Life if I should not make use of him, notwithstanding such an Inhibition.

And is not the Life and Health and Salvation of my immortal Soul dearer to me than any other concern? Is not Communion with God the sweetest and most precious of all my delights? Is it not the Life of my Soul, and the Crown of all my Joys? And are not those Administrations most desirable in which I find my self most edify'd? Must I then be such an Enemy to my own comfort and happiness, as to throw away all the opportunities which I might have

have of that kind, only in a complement?
Amicus Socrates, Amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas. The Bishops are my Friends, and the Ministers my Friends, and I have a true Love for them, but Charity begins at home, especially when my precious Soul more worth than all the World lyes at stake.

This Case is somewhat the clearer in those Parishes where the publick Ministers are either Ignorant, Profane or Malignant.

3. Nay, suppose I am so well satisfy'd in Communion with the Parish Churches in all Administrations, as not to desire better, or not to expect better in the Dissenters Meetings, yet I cannot see what Schism, *i. e.* what breach of Christian Love and Charity there is in it for me to be present sometimes in the Congregations of the sober Dissenters, and to joyn with them who Worship the same God, in the Name of the same Mediator, Read and Preach the same Word, and live in hopes of the same Inheritance, and differ from me only in some little things which I think not worth contending for, scarce worth the mentioning, hereby to evidence, my universal Love and Catholick Charity, and that I am not of narrow, Schismatical, dividing Principles, nor one that will Sacrifice Christian Love to the petty trifling Fancies and Interests of a Party.

The sober Dissenters are such as I have reason to hope have Communion with God in what they do, and therefore why should not I now and then have Communion with them? *In every Nation he that fears God, and works righteousness, is accepted of him;* and why should he not be accepted of me? why may not I have fellowship with them that have fellowship with the Father and with
 1 John 1.3 his Son Jesus Christ? To fancy Schism, i. e. Uncharitable contention and a breach of Christian Love in this is very absurd.

Obj. But hereby I encourage a Schism, and countenance them in their Separation from that which in my Eye is lawful and good, and doth not give just cause for such a Separation.

Answ. There must be grains of allowance for difference of apprehension: Different Capacities, Constitutions, and Inclinations, Custom and especially Education must be put into the scale, and while I walk according to the light which God hath given me, I must charitably believe that others do so too.

Whether the Dissenters Meetings be as to the constitution and *modus esse* of them (looking upon them only as diversities of Communion) Schismatical, hath been consider'd

sider'd already, and found otherwise by Scripture Light.

This common outcry is that it is the setting up of *Altar against Altar*, which is not so, for at the most it is but Altar by Altar, and though I have often read of one Body, and one Spirit, and one Hope, and one Lord, and one Faith, and one Baptism, and one God and Father. Yet ^{Eph. 4. 4, 5, 6.} I could never find a word in all the New Testament of one Altar, except *Jesus Christ*. The Altar that sanctifies every Gift, in whom we all centre. And if there ^{Heb. 13.10} be any of the Dissenters who are *Schismatical*, i. e. Contentious, Bitter, and Uncharitable in their Separation, let them bear their own Burthen, but by my presence with them I encourage that in them, no more than I do too much of a like Spirit in too many of those who are call'd the Church of *England* Men, by my adherence to them.

To conclude, By all this it is evident that Unity of Affection is the thing to be labour'd after more than Uniformity in Modes and Ceremonies. We have been long enough trying to root Schism out of the Church, *vi & armis*, by Impositions, Fines and Penalties, choaking our Brethren because their Throats have not been so wide as ours. And it hath been found ineffectual, even in the judgment of our Great *Sanbedrim*, who have declar'd that giving ease to scrupulous Consciences

sciences is the likeliest way to unite their Majesties Protestant Subjects in Interest and Affection; what if we should now try another Method and turn the Stream of our endeavours into another Channel? Hitherto we have been as it were striving which should hate one another most, what if we should now strive which should love one another best, and be most ready to do all Offices of true Charity and Kindness, and bury all our little Feuds and Animosities in that Blessed Grave of Christian Love and Charity?

What if we should every one of us of each Party (as we have been too often call'd) set our selves by our Preaching to Promote and Propagate the *Gospel of Peace*, and by our Prayers to prevail with God for a more plentiful pouring out of the *Spirit of Peace*, that the dividing names of *Baalim* may be taken out of our Mouths, and that however it goes with Uniformity of Ceremony, we may keep the *Unity of the Spirit*; and then I doubt not but that we should soon see our *English Jerusalem* Establish'd; a Praise in the midst of the Earth.

And yet I am afraid even Saints will be Men, there will be remainders even of those Corruptions which are the seed of Schism, in the best, till we all come to the perfect Man.

And

And that's the comfort of my Soul, that if we can but once get to Heaven, we shall be for ever out of the noise and hurry of this quarrellsome contentious, dividing World, and the Church *Triumphant* shall be no more *Militant*, but that happy World of Everlasting *Light*, will be a World of Everlasting Love.

FINIS.





THE
Lay-Man's Reasons
FOR HIS
JOINING
IN
STATED COMMUNION
WITH A
CONGREGATION
OF
Moderate Dissenters.



*K. with
preceding tract*

L O N D O N:
Printed in the YEAR, 1717.





THE
 Lay-Man's REASONS,
 FOR HIS
 JOINING
 IN
 Stated Communion
 WITH A
 CONGREGATION
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 MODERATE DISSENTERS.

MY Case in short is this. I am
 Born in a Christian Nation, and
 Baptiz'd into the Christian
 Faith; and I reckon it my un-
 speakable Honour and Happinefs that I am
 so, and that I live in the Times of Reforma-
 tion.

tion. In this Nation, wherever I am, I find Publick Assemblies for Religious Worship, all agreeing to Worship the same God, in the Name of the same Mediator, under the Conduct and Influence of the same Spirit, according to the Rule of the same Scriptures, holding Communion with the Universal Church, in Faith, Hope and Love, under the Presidency of Gospel Ministers, by the same Ordinances of the Word, Sacraments and Prayer, looking for the same Blessed Hope : All these Assemblies concur, in their Testimony, not only against Jews, Pagans, and Mahometans abroad, but against Atheists, Infidels and Profane at home ; and likewise in their Protestation against the Tyranny and Idolatry of the Church and Court of *Rome*.

But I find there is some Difference among these Christian Assemblies ; tho' all good Christians are one in Christ by Faith, and one with each other by Holy Love, yet in outward and lesser Things I observe they do not all agree ; and it is no Surprize to me that they do not ; for I know that the best are imperfect in this World. 1. I find some of these Assemblies, and indeed far the greater Number, *Established* and *Appointed* by an Act of Parliament at the time of the happy Restoration. 14 Car. 2. The Ministers presiding in these Assemblies obtain'd by Bishops, usually presented by Lay-Patrons, and to the great Advantage of their Ministry dignified, and honourably provided for by the Civil Government ; the Ordinances Admi-

Administred in these Assemblies according to the Book of Common Prayer ; and the Discipline manag'd by the Chancellor of the Diocefs, and his Court.

2. I find some few of these Assemblies, *Permitted* and *Allowed*, by another Act of Parliament Twenty Seven Years after the former, at the time of the late Glorious Revolution, 1 *W.* and *M.* The Ministers presiding in them ordain'd by Presbyters, chosen by the People, and tho' taken under the Protection, yet destitute of the Authority and Support of the Civil Powers. The Ordinances Administred in them not by a set, prescribed, constant Form, but by the Rule of the Scripture in general, and according to the Measure of the Gift given to him that ministers. The Discipline manag'd by the Minister himself, who presides in other Ordinances, with the Advice and Concurrence of the Congregation. Providence hath so cast my Lot, and *appointed the Bounds of my Habitation*, that Assemblies of both these Kinds are within my Reach.

And through the Grace of God I think I can truly say, this is my *Character*. I am heartily concerned about my Soul, and my Everlasting Condition. It is my Care and Desire to please God, and to work out my Salvation. All other Interests and Concerns are nothing to me in Comparison with this. I seriously profess I am afraid of Sin, and am solicitous to be found in the Way of my Duty,

Duty, and to get all the Help I can to forward me towards Heaven, and fit me for it. Hereunto I can add this further Protestation, that through the Grace of God I have a Catholick Charity for all good Christians. I cannot monopolize the Church; 'tis narrow enough, I dare not make it narrower. I love a good Man, whatever Party he belongs to, and him that follows Christ, tho' he doth not *follow with me. He that fears God, and works Righteousness, is accepted of God, and shall be accepted by me.*

My Practice is this. I join my self sometimes with the Assemblies of the Publick Establishment, if any Opportunity offers it self on a Week-day; or if I happen on a Lord's Day to be out of the Reach of such Assemblies, as I chuse statedly to join with, I freely and chearfully attend the Divine Service of the Church, knowing nothing in the Prayers but what I can heartily say *Amen* to, which I chuse rather to do than to answer aloud after the Minister. And this I do, that I may testify the Catholick Charity, and my Communion with and Affection to all good Christians, tho' I be not in every thing of their Mind. Hereby likewise I endeavour to *fulfil all Righteousness*, and in my Place I bear my Testimony to that which is of God in the publick Establishment, wherein I *do rejoyce, and will rejoyce.*

But I constantly join in all the Ordinances with a congregation of moderate and sober
Dissenters;

Dissenters ; with them I hold Stated Communion, and with them, after many serious and impartial Thoughts, have put my self under the Ministerial Conduct, and Inspection of a Preacher or Teacher, *Allow'd*, tho' not *Authoriz'd* by the Law of the Land, but one who is manifested in my Conscience to be a true and faithful Minister of Jesus Christ.

The Reasons why I chuse my settled Communion with Dissenters are these Six, which abundantly satisfy my own Conscience at present, not judging other Mens Consciences, nor knowing what further Light God may hereafter give me in this Matter.

I. I think it is my Duty to *own and adhere to that Ministry, which seems to me to be wrongfully and injuriously excluded from the publick Establishment*, and the Exclusion of which was professedly intended and design'd by the Act of Uniformity. By making such Oaths, Declarations, and Subscriptions, the indispensable Terms of their Admission into the Ministry, or Continuance in it, as they could not comply with, without sinning against their Consciences, they were and are effectually shut out from the Publick Establishment : This I take to be a Wrong, both to *them* who are well worthy of the Church's double Honours, and to *the Church*, which stands in need of, and would be greatly benefited by their useful Labours. I therefore think that I ought in my Place both to *bear my Testimony against the Exclusion of them*, lest I should partake with other Mens Sins, and should be found to have laid a Confederacy

Confederacy with those that put so many burning, shining Lights under a Bushel; and also to *aid, assist and encourage those that are so excluded*, putting my Soul into their Souls stead, and then doing as I would be done by. Were I a Minister I must be shut out as they are, and should expect to be countenanced in suffering for Conscience-sake, and therefore cannot but countenance them. And this is that which I verily believe most Men will do when it comes to be their own Case, whatever they talk when they are uppermost. Those who at any time have thought themselves unjustly restrain'd from the publick Exercise of their Ministry, have ever yet thought themselves oblig'd to exercise it in private as they could, and their Friends oblig'd to stand by them in it, and so I believe they ever will.

2. I think it is my Duty to *chuse rather stately to join in those Administrations which come nearest to the Divine Institution, than in those which have in them an unnecessary Mixture of Humane Invention.* How far Men may lawfully devise and use Ceremonies of their own, under Pretence of beautifying God's Ordinances, and edifying themselves and others, I pretend not to be a competent Judge; but to me it seems very plain that the Ordinances of Christ are *purser* and look *better* without them, and that those who make the Scripture only their Rule, and admit nothing into their Worship but what is warranted by that, are to be preferr'd much before those who practice many

ny Things in their stated, publick Worship, which they do not produce any Ground or Warrant for in the Holy Scripture. To me it seems much better in Baptism only to wash a Child with Water in the Name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, *in Token that he shall not be ashamed to confess Christ crucified*, which is Christ's Institution, than besides that, *in Token of the same thing to sign him with the Sign of the Cross*; and in the Lord's Supper to use the Gesture Christ's Disciples us'd, rather than another devised by Men. Having chosen the Scripture for the standing Rule of my Faith and Practice, I chuse to have Communion with those who seem to me to keep most closely to it.

3. I think it is my Duty to chuse rather *statedly to join with those who Assert and Maintain the Liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, than with those that willingly submit to the Impositions of Men in the Things of God, and justifie those Impositions.* I am very well satisfied, that when my Redeemer, in kindness to his Church, broke the Yoke of that Ceremonial Law which was given by Moses, he did not leave it in the Power of any Man, or Company of Men, in the World to make another like Yoke, and lay that upon the Necks of the Disciples. I doubt not but there is a Power in the Christian Magistrates, or other Governours of the Church, to restrain and correct Natural Indecencies in any of the Necessary Circumstances of Publick Worship, Time, Place, Habit,

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bit, or Gesture; and that, in any of these which unavoidably renders the Administration of the Ordinances either despicable, or inconvenient, or unprofitable to those that attend upon them; but I see nothing in the Gospel which warrants any Governours, Civil or Sacred, to impose such Habits and Gestures as they please, because they think them Decent, upon those who think 'em incongruous; and then to make the use of them the indispensable Condition of their Communion. In the Religious Assemblies of the Dissenters I observe, that generally every thing is done with the Gravity and Decorum that becomes the Solemnities there perform'd. I see no Uncouth Habits, I hear no Noisie Responses, but all things are Manag'd Decently and in Order, with Reverence and to Edification; and yet no Ceremonies are impos'd, no Terms of Communion made which Christ has not made, no Days made Holy but that, which God has made so, no Stress laid upon the holiness of Places, which the New Testament gives not the least hint of since the Destruction of the Temple, and therefore I chuse to join with them, for where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Their Ministers are not ty'd up to any one Prescribed Form of Prayer, but are at liberty to vary and enlarge according to the Improvements of their Knowledge and Warmth of their Devotion, and the Case of those whose Mouth they are in Prayer: And, as I think, every Minister ought to have some Competent Measure of the Gift of Prayer as well as Preaching, and that otherwise he

is not duely Qualified ; so I think, having that Ability, he ought not to be abridg'd of his Liberty to use it, *especially not in the Administration of Sacraments. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the Power of any.*

1 Cor. 6.12.

4. I think it is my Duty to chuse rather to join with those that refuse to admit into Communion with them such as are openly Vicious and Prophane, than with those, that being under an unhappy Obligation to Administer the Lord's Supper to all in Office, and to transfer the Trial of all Suspensions to the Bishop's Court, cannot possibly use so strict a Discipline : Not that I think I am ever the worse for bad Peoples joining with me in the Lord's-Supper, but perhaps they are the worse for my joining with them, and I would not be accessary to the hardening of them in their Impieties. I do not expect to meet with any Society of Christians perfectly pure on this side Heaven, there are Spots, I know, in our Feasts of Charity : But I must prefer those who appear to me either to be more pure from the mixture of corrupt Members, or at least more solicitous and desirous to be so, and more capable of being so by their Constitution. I have seen with much satisfaction many of the Church of England Zealous against Vice and Profaneness, and active for the Supressing of it, and have a mighty Value and Veneration for them upon that account, and wish their Constitution would allow them to do more, by Church Censures, in Prosecution of that worthy De-

sign than I apprehend it will; but for that Pious Zeal of theirs I have so often heard them call'd Presbyterians, by those that are Bigots for Episcopacy and the Ceremonies, that I confess it has made me love the Presbyterians the better, since Zeal against Profaneness enters so much into their Character, even their Enemies themselves being Judges.

5. I think it is my Duty to *chuse rather to join with those Churches, whose Constitution leaves room for a Catholick and Comprehensive Charity, than with those whose avowed Principles and Sentiments force them to Monopolize the Church in England to themselves, and forbid them to own the Dissenting Ministers as true Ministers, and their Churches as true Churches.* This I confess has a mighty influence upon me. The Sober Dissenting Ministers, as far as I am acquainted with them, are manifest in my Conscience to be faithful Ministers of Jesus Christ; and in their Administrations I cannot but see the Institution of Ordinances observ'd, and every thing well fitted to answer the End of them: I know many who constantly attend in their Assemblies, and have observ'd them to be Sound in their Principles, Sober in their Lives, Honest in their Dealings, Constant in their Devotions, and in all Instances to have given undeniable Proof of their being sincere good Christians; when therefore in the Books and Sermons that plead for the Church of *England*, I find these Ministers Censur'd and Condemn'd as Usurpers, Impostors,

postors, and Lay-intruders ; all their Administrations Null'd, their Assemblies Deny'd to be parts of the Catholick Church, all that join with them Sentenc'd as Schismatics to the Pit of Hell, and no hopes of Salvation given them, but what God's General Mercy allows to Moral Heathens ; and all the Reformed Churches that have no Bishops, falling so far under the same Censure, that their Ministers cannot be admitted Ministers of the Church of *England*, unless they be Re-ordain'd, while those that have been Popish Priests may ; and all these harsh Censures excus'd from uncharitableness with this, that they cannot help it, their Principles lead 'em to it ; then think I, the Lord deliver me from such Principles, and from that pretended Unity which is destructive of real Charity ! On the other side, I find the Dissenters willingly owning the *Establish'd* Churches as True Churches, their Ministers as True Ministers, their Principles leading them to do so. I often hear them in their Publick Assemblies pray for them, and for their Success in their Ministry, and profess their Communion with them in Faith, Hope and Love, and in their common Converse I hear 'em speak of them with Love and Respect. My judgment and Inclination leads me to the Charitable side, as the best and safest ; and by all I have read and heard in this Controversie, that appears to me to be the side of the Dissenters.

6. I think it is my Duty to attend on those
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Administrations which I find to be most for my own Edification in Faith, Holiness, and Comfort, and best (with me) to answer the Ends of Holy Ordinances. Herein I hope I may be allow'd to judge for my self; I have often tried both, and if I know my own Heart, without Prejudice or Partiality, and I must say, that I have found my Heart more affected and enlarg'd in those Confessions, Prayers and Thanksgivings, which have been offer'd up without a stated prescribed Form, than ever it was in those that have been invariably ty'd up to certain Words. Far be it from me to make Comparifon of Mens Abilities and Performances; I greatly Honour and Value the Gifts and Labours of many that are in the Publick Establishment; but to my Capacity the Dissenters Praying and Preaching is most adapted, and most profitable; and those I am to reckon the *best Gifts*, and to *Covet earnestly*, which I find by Experience best for me. Sabbath time is precious, and I would willingly improve it so as will be most for my Advantage in keeping up Communion with God, and preparing for Heaven. If it be owing to my own weakness that these Administrations are most agreeable to me, yet while I sincerely design God's Glory, and my own Spiritual Benefit therein, I trust, through Christ, that God will not only forgive me, but accept me, and that they also, *who are strong will bear with my Infirmities.*

These are the Principles I go upon, and from them I conclude,

1. That

1. That if the present Dictate of my Conscience and Practical Judgment be, that it is my Duty to chuse my stated Communion with the Congregations of Dissenters, then it is my Sin if I do not do it ; for *to him that knows to do good, and doth it not to him it is Sin.*

2. Then by Occasional Communion with the Church of *England*, whereby I design to testify my Charity and Catholick Communion, and my Approbation of that in it which is good, I do not in the least condemn my Stated Communion with the Dissenters; for though I am not convinced that it is a Sin of Commission at any time to join with the Established Church, nor that any thing in itself unlawful is required as the Condition of Lay Communion, yet upon the Grounds aforesaid I am fully convinced it would be a Sin of Omission *not to joyn* with the Dissenters. I will not condemn any thing that is good, nor refuse a less good, when a better is not in my reach; but when it is, I think I am obliged in Duty to God, and in Concern for my own Soul to prefer it. *All things are lawful for me, but all things edifie not.*

3. Then in all this I am far from Judging and Censuring those who differ from me. I walk according to my present Light, preferring that which I think and find to be best ; and I verily believe those good Christians whom I know, that constantly join
with

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with the Publick Establishment do so too, preferring that which they think and find to be best; and both they and I (I trust) are accepted of God. To those who condemn me herein, I shall only offer that
2 Cor. 10. 7. reasonable Demand of St. Paul. *If any Man trust to himself that he is Christ's let him of himself think this again, that as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's.*

FINIS.

